

ASEAN GUIDELINES ON CROSS-COUNTRY EXCHANGE OF EXPERTISE

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

The ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters (ACCSM), since its establishment in 1981, has consistently been a platform for the exchange of information, innovations, and best practices in public service management in the ASEAN. It has also continued to promote cooperation and mutual assistance in capacity-building efforts geared toward narrowing the development gap among ASEAN Member States (AMS).

With the signing of the ASEAN Leaders Declaration on the Role of the Civil Service as a Catalyst for Achieving the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 during the 30th ASEAN Summit held in April 2017 in Manila, the ACCSM is recognized as a catalyst for enhancing cross-sector and cross-pillar cooperation in building the ASEAN Community, and as such, is expected to provide support towards furthering regional integration under the ASEAN Community Vision 2045.

The ACCSM currently provides various capacity-building programs through the ASEAN Resource Centers maintained by the AMS, projects under the ACCSM and ACCSM Plus Three Work Plans, as well as regular programs of the training institutions of the civil service bodies in ASEAN.

While these programs offer valuable information and insights that learners can apply to their respective organizations, there is no guarantee that the information transmitted is absorbed and applied effectively. The 70-20-10 model of learning and development¹ suggests that for optimum learning, on-the-job experiences offer better results in terms of retention of learning and development of skills.

In light of this, cross-country exchange engagements for civil servants may be a means for greater learning and understanding of the diverse characteristics of the ASEAN region. Cross-country exchange engagements may develop expertise among civil servants in the ASEAN, particularly in:

- Obtaining and sharing highly technical knowledge and skills;
- Learning from best practices of other AMS and adopting these into the local context; and
- Forging deeper understanding and appreciation of diversity in the ASEAN.

¹ A model of learning and development (developed by McCall, Lombardo and Eichin) on how people learn effectively, based on a survey of around 200 executives who self-reported on how they learned: 70 (on the job experience); 20 (mentoring/coaching); and 10 (formal classes/courses, reading).

B. Objectives

These guidelines intend to provide government agencies in the ASEAN with general recommendations relative to the implementation of cross-country exchange engagements within the region². The guidelines also seek to standardize the process, evaluate and improve engagements, and ensure that copies of records, documents, and other materials relative to cross-country exchange engagements are collected and stored for documentation purposes. Ultimately, the guidelines aim to facilitate the exchange and development of expertise across different sectors in ASEAN.

C. Coverage

The cross-country exchange engagements cover temporary assignment³ arrangements across ASEAN Member States:

1. Among ASEAN civil service institutions⁴;
2. Across the ASEAN civil service, in priority sectors identified by ASEAN⁵ as well as other emerging areas such as digital transformation and green economy; and/or
3. As may be agreed upon by the AMS.

D. Potential Users of the Guidelines

These guidelines are crafted as reference for AMS in cross-country exchange of expertise, providing minimum standards and requirements to ensure that the welfare of civil servants in the region are maintained and that the objectives of the undertakings are met and well-documented.

II. PRELIMINARY ACTIVITIES

A. Proposal/Invitation

The cross-country exchange of expertise program begins with either a *proposal* from the Sending Agency or an *invitation* from the Receiving Agency.

A *Sending Agency* may initiate arrangements for a cross-country exchange of expertise by submitting a *proposal* to either the sectoral body or to an identified

² The implementation of these guidelines shall be subject to the national policies, administrative processes, and established procedural/regulatory frameworks in each AMS. It must also be ensured that the operationalization of these guidelines at the national level is aligned with domestic institutional protocols.

³ d. Temporary assignment outside of the regular workstation to undertake specific tasks/project within a specific period of time. Salaries and benefits are paid by the Sending Agency.

⁴ National organizations represented in the ACCSM, which may include attached/related agencies

⁵ Relative to the *ASEAN Declaration on the Role of the Civil Service as a Catalyst for Achieving the ASEAN Community Vision 2025*, the ACCSM identified six priority sectors (environment, disaster management, health, gender mainstreaming, labor, and education).

agency within the ASEAN. If submitted to the sectoral body, it will be circulated among AMS to determine interest among the agencies.

A *Receiving Agency* may also initiate arrangements for a cross-country exchange of expertise by submitting an *invitation* to the sectoral body for a specific program/project that may accommodate detailed employees from government agencies from other AMS.

B. Memorandum of Understanding

The *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)* between the Sending Agency and the Receiving Agency may cover the following:

1. Subject Program/Project of the cross-country exchange;
2. Purpose of the exchange;
3. Participant/s
 - Qualifications/Criteria for selection:
 - AMS are encouraged to employ gender-responsive criteria in the selection of participants, in observance of said standard identified in ACCSM's Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit;
 - AMS may consider including employment status of participants to the Cross-Country Exchange;
 - Language Proficiency: Agreement on the required English proficiency level to ensure effective communication and task execution in the host country;
 - Number;
4. Duration of the exchange;
5. Expected outputs/deliverables;
6. Description of activities/responsibilities of participant/s;
7. Responsibilities of Sending and Receiving Agencies;
8. Provision on data privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property (for materials exchanged or produced during the cross-country engagement);
9. Financial support for the exchange (expenses to be shouldered by the Sending and Receiving Agencies and/or External Partners);
10. Cross-Country Exchange Plan, Re-Entry Action Plan (REAP), and Service Contract
 - *Cross-Country Exchange Plan* – specifies the conditions of the arrangements with the receiving AMS which may include, but are not limited to, the purpose, duration, administrative and reportorial arrangements, activities, deliverables, etc.;
 - *Re-Entry Action Plan (REAP)* – details the expected activities of the returning employee for a specified period not exceeding one year from his/her return to the sending agency (including deliverables and timelines)
 - *Service Contract* – an agreement specifying, among others, the length of service obligation of the participant and the conditions that apply in case the participant leaves the agency or the government before completing the service obligation;
11. Dispute resolution mechanism;

12. Report on Detail Arrangement for submission to the concerned Sectoral Body and ASEAN Secretariat;
13. Report on REAP Outcome for submission to the concerned Sectoral Body and ASEAN Secretariat; and
14. Such other matters as may be necessary for the successful conduct of the exchange.

III. ROLES OF SENDING AND RECEIVING AGENCIES AND PARTICIPATING CIVIL SERVANTS

A. The Sending Agency shall:

1. Provide adequate preparation for the cross-country detail of its employee/s, which may include, but are not limited to, appropriate documentary requirements, pre-departure briefing, etc.;
2. Ensure that employee/s is/are healthy by submitting a medical certificate issued by a licensed government physician certifying that the employee/s is/are physically and mentally fit to participate in the cross-country exchange engagement;
3. Provide ample support to its employee/s for the duration of the detail such as salaries and allowances, leave credits, and other benefits (other forms of support which may include, but are not limited to, return airline tickets, travel allowances, and insurance, other allowances such as Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA); and regular communication on the progress of the program as may be discussed and agreed upon by the Sending Agency and Receiving Agency);
4. Ensure fulfilment of participant's obligations in the Service Contract and the REAP and consider establishing an internal evaluation mechanism for post-engagement review; and
5. Submit the Report on REAP Outcome to the concerned sectoral body within the prescribed deadline.

B. The Receiving Agency shall:

1. Ensure that the detailed employee is given adequate support (Focal Point/mentor from receiving agency) to enable him/her to meet the purpose of the detail and maximize the learning opportunities provided;
2. Ensure the safety of employee/s participating in the cross-country exchange engagement;
3. Identify temporary government housing/dormitory within the proximity of the office where personnel will be assigned or reasonably priced private housing with access to public transportation;
4. Provide local transportation for the participant to and from the office;
5. Provide arrival briefing, onboarding, and continuing support mechanism for the duration of the detail;
6. Provide regular updates to the Sending Agency on the progress of the

employee and his/her program, written assessment/performance feedback report for the duration of the detail;

7. Ensure that the assignments of the employee/s participating in the engagement comply with the host country's laws and protocols, local institutional rules and relevant requirements (e.g. data privacy, workplace conduct, occupational safety); and
8. Submit to the concerned sectoral body the Report on Detail Arrangement, including benefits to the organization, if any, within the prescribed deadline.

C. The Sending Agency and Receiving Agency may also discuss and/or seek support from external partners for the following:

1. Return airline tickets, travel allowances, and insurance, other allowances such as DSA, and communication allowance on the progress of the program; and
2. Cost of temporary housing for the participant for the duration of the exchange.

D. The Civil Servant participating in the cross-country exchange engagement is expected to fulfill the responsibilities and obligations under his/her Service Contract with the Sending Agency, the Detail Plan, and the REAP. He/she is also expected to contribute to/and participate in future capacity building programs either as a resource speaker, mentor, project leader, coach, and other pertinent roles for fellow civil servants in ASEAN.

IV. FUNDING

Costs for Cross-country Exchange of Expertise, for both Sending and Receiving Agencies shall be specified as part of their respective responsibilities in the MOU.

The funding for cross-country exchange of expertise may be internally sourced, through cost-sharing, or through the support of external partners.

V. REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

For records and evaluation purposes, the Report on REAP Outcome shall be submitted within six months after the conclusion of the engagement and the Report on Detail Arrangement shall be submitted within 30 days after the conclusion of the engagement to the sectoral body and the ASEAN Secretariat.

Engagements will be reported to the sectoral body concerned during its Senior Officials Meetings.

A database of civil servants who participated in the cross-country exchange of expertise, details about the exchange, sector/s involved, and the outputs delivered shall be created for reference, transparency, and knowledge management, provided that strict data privacy measures and cybersecurity protocols are implemented to protect the personal information of the participants.

The ACCSM may also consider developing a Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) Framework, which may include key performance indicators, feedback mechanisms, and impact assessment tools, to track the effectiveness of each engagement and support continuous program improvement and policy review.

VI. REVISION

These guidelines shall be subject to periodic review every three (3) years to ensure they remain updated with regional contexts.
